

REMARKS

Applicant requests favorable reconsideration and allowance of the subject application in view of the preceding amendments and the following remarks.

Claims 2-9 and 18-22 are presented for consideration. Claims 2, 3, 18, 19, 21 and 22 are independent. Claims 1, 10-13 and 16 have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. Claims 2-6 have been amended to clarify features of the subject invention. Support for these changes can be found in the original application, as filed. Therefore, no new matter has been added.

Applicant notes with appreciation that claims 18-22 have been allowed, and that claims 2-9 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form to include the recitations of their respective base claim. To expedite allowance of this application, the subject matter of independent claim 1 has been substantively incorporated in each of claims 2 and 3. Therefore, Applicant submits that new independent claims 2 and 3, and claims 4-9 respectively depending therefrom, also should be deemed allowable at the outset.

Applicant requests favorable reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections set forth in the above-noted Office Action.

Claims 1, 10 and 11 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102 as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,100,515 to Nishi et al. Claims 12, 13 and 16 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being unpatentable over the Nishi et al. patent in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,621,216 to Clarke et al. Applicant submits that the cited, whether taken individually or in combination, does not teach many features of the present invention, as previously recited in claims 1, 10-13 and 16. Therefore, these rejections are respectfully traversed. Nevertheless, as discussed above, claims 1,

10-13 and 16 have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. Accordingly, these rejections have become moot and should be withdrawn.

For the reasons noted above, Applicant submits that the present invention, as recited in independent claims 2 and 3, also is patentably defined over the cited art.

Dependent claims 4-9 also should be deemed allowable, in their own right, for defining other patentable features of the present invention in addition to those recited in their respective independent claims. Further individual consideration of these dependent claims is requested.

Applicant submits that this Amendment After Final Rejection clearly places this application in condition for allowance. This Amendment was not earlier presented because Applicant believed that the prior Amendment placed the application in condition for allowance. Accordingly, entry of the instant Amendment, as an earnest attempt to advance prosecution and reduce the number of issues, is requested under 37 CFR 1.116.

Favorable reconsideration, withdrawal of the rejections set forth in the above-noted Office Action and an early notice of allowance are also requested.

Applicant's undersigned attorney may be reached in our Washington, D.C. office by telephone at (202) 530-1010. All correspondence should be directed to our address listed below.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steven E. Warner", is written over a horizontal line.

Attorney for Applicant

Steven E. Warner

Registration No. 33,326

FITZPATRICK, CELLA, HARPER & SCINTO
30 Rockefeller Plaza
New York, New York 10112-3801
Facsimile: (212) 218-2200
SEW/eab

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